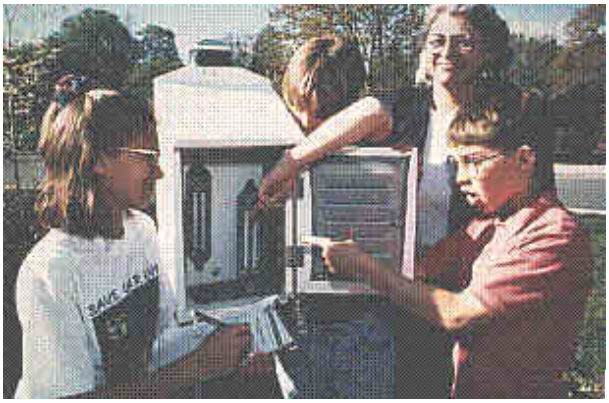
THE CHALLENGE OF THE CHESAPEAKE

S.C.Delaney/U.S.EPA

The Chesapeake Bay is the largest and most productive estuary in America, and the first targeted for restoration and protection. The Bay is especially hard hit by nonpoint sources of pollution, with urban sprawl, residential development and agricultural production contributing massive quantities of the nutrients nitrogen and phosphorus to the Bay and its tributaries.

In 1983, the EPA, in partnership with the states of Maryland, Virginia and Pennsylvania, the District of Columbia and the Chesapeake Bay Commission, a tri-state legislative body, formed the Chesapeake Bay Program to lead the restoration of the Bay and its entire watershed. The Bay Program has identified the problem areas for the Bay, and has set specific goals to overcome those problems, such as reducing nutrients entering the Bay by 40% by the year 2000. The Bay Program has used sophisticated computer modelling and Bay-wide monitoring, as well as extensive volunteer citizen monitoring to measure success. This non-regulatory approach has been working very well.



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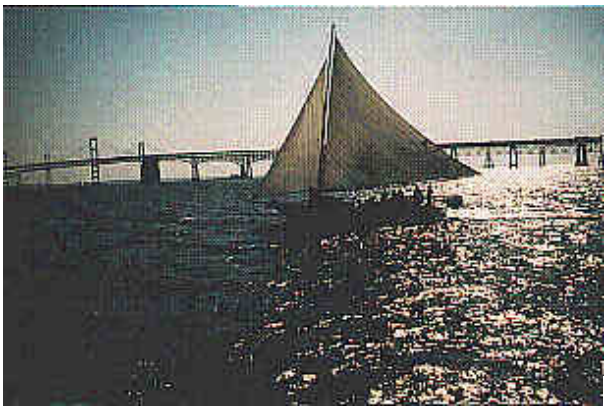
The Bay Program has had a number of successes: toxic discharges have been cut in half in the Bay watershed, striped bass have come back, underwater grasses have returned and fish passages have reopened hundreds of miles of stream spawning areas for migratory fish. There is, however, still a lot of work to do to fully restore the Bay. Algae and low dissolved oxygen, in particular, continue to plague extensive areas of the Chesapeake. EPA is committed to continued source management over the next decade in order to resolve the biggest of the Bay's water quality problems.



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Return to Water Quality